



Gator Times

USS NASSAU (LHA 4)

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Sailors Relax in Bahrain



USN photo by PHAN Steven Scott Smith.

ENS Yifan Guo takes a ride on a domesticated camel during a cultural tour in Bahrain, Dec. 30, 2005. NASSAU Sailors enjoyed several tours provided by NASSAU's Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) during a port call in Bahrain. The ship left Bahrain January 3, 2006 to continue support of Maritime Security Operations while on deployment in the 5th Fleet Area of Operations.



USN photo by PHAN Amanda Clayton.

CMDCM(SW/AW) Makowski performs a spot check with ADAN Roger Cunningham. Spot checks are performed on a regular basis to ensure equipment is safe and ready to use.

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As I See It

Remaining Focused

CMDCM(SW/AW) Richard Makowski

As we depart our second port visit of the deployment, I think the ship is a little heavier than it was when we first pulled in. The large number of blankets and souvenirs I saw come across the brow every day was amazing. I'm sure there will be a lot of family and friends really happy with the gifts they will receive when we return.

Oh I forgot the best part of the visit! This is the gold capital of the world, not the low quality 10 and 14 carat jewelry you get back home, but the 18, 20 and pure 24 karat stuff. I have seen our Sailors sporting many new pieces of "bling, bling," including a certain CMC I know! Years from now, when they pull it out of their jewelry boxes, hopefully fond memories of a visit to a foreign land will return to us in our elder years.

Now we look forward to an opportunity to continue to hone our skills preparing for our upcoming certification cycles, and prove that the Navy's continuous training initiative works. We will be tasked to prove our Sailors are capable of providing the training required to maintain the ship at the highest readiness condition.

The Fleet Response Plan (FRP), which started about two years ago, is continually changing and evolving. Commands are tasked to become more and more self-sustaining.

The FRP was developed after the Navy noticed that a command's readiness was at it highest after a ship completed a cruise. Then the command would go through a yard period, and through normal crew rotation lose all the skills it had learned over the deployment.

The new initiative allows the Navy to utilize post deploying ships for surge deployments, knowing the crews will be trained and qualified to complete the mission.

This new way of thinking and of doing business provides certain challenges to the crew and supervisors, we must continue to ensure the crew is trained on ship qualifications, while at the same time we must balance the large number of off ship school and qualification requirements. We must do all this while we ensure the material condition of the ship does not falter and the quality of life for our Sailors at home is kept at a maximum level. These challenges are for every level of the command.

(see 'As I See It' on pg. 7)



USN photo by PH3 Andrew King

CMDCM(SW/AW) Richard Makowski and AVCM(AW) Patricia Kelly treated Sailors to a special bingo on Christmas Day. The bingo games brought a close to a day of relaxation and a fulfilling dinner.

My Day With The XO

Seeing things through a different set of eyes

By AN Garrett Brown

On Dec. 11, 2005, I was pulled into the V-4 office on board USS NASSAU, currently deployed to the Arabian Gulf, and was told by my LPO, LCPO, Bos'n, and my departmental LCPO that my presence was requested by the XO, CAPT John Roberti.

Only being on board NASSAU for about a month and a half, and only being in the Navy for about five months, I was scared to say the least. My LCPO, ABFC(AW/SW) Damian Lazarus, began asking me if I had been in any legal trouble that I hadn't told him about, or if I had any unpaid debts, and I respectfully answered no. I was clueless and scared at the same time, and was very unsure what lay in store for me.

I quickly ran to the head and made sure my uniform was in standards – shirt tucked in, my hair not wild looking – and returned for the journey to the XO's office.

When my Bos'n, LTJG Louie Cedillos, and I arrived at the XO's stateroom, I noticed several comics posted on the bulletin board outside his office, and that made me a little calmer. Shortly thereafter, the Air Boss, CDR Leonard Loughran, arrived and waited patiently for the XO's arrival. I grew more nervous now as the two officers with more than 30 years combined experience looked at me wondering what the XO was going to say. They were as clueless as I was.

The XO finally arrived and said good afternoon, and shook my sweaty hand. He offered me a chair as my Air Boss and Bos'n stood by at attention. The XO began asking me about some of the comments I had written on a critique during my indoc class, some of which were about the ship and some of which were about the class itself.

Then he said the words that nearly made my mouth drop open in surprise: "Airmen Brown, tomorrow you are going to be 'Deputy XO'. You are going to go everywhere I go and see what it is that I do on this ship, to help not only give you a different view of this ship, but also a more positive view of the Navy."

I grinned immediately knowing what a great honor and privilege I had just been given.

My day as Deputy XO started around 0700 when we went to the Department Head meeting. I saw about 25 officers whose faces I didn't even recognize. As they went around the room telling the XO the news and plans of the day, more than half started off by saying, "Good morning XO, good morning Mini-XO." This made me smile, as it seemed that the XO had given all the Dept. Heads a brief so they would know I was coming.

We then went to the XO's office where we sat down and went through some of the daily paperwork that piles up on his desk when unattended. I proofread a few request chits, a few surface and air warfare completion certificates, and even some of the officers' request chits. He then read a (non-judicial punishment) case to me, excluding the names to protect the innocent, and looked me in the eye and asked



USN photo by PHAN Amanda Clayton

CAPT John Roberti, NASSAU's Executive Officer, discusses activities during an underway replenishment with AN Garrett Brown of NASSAU's Air Department. Brown, served as "Deputy XO" for the day, shadowing the XO to experience the Navy from a different point of view.

me what I thought should be done. It seemed as though he took my "advice" seriously, and acted like my input was just as important as his own.

We then headed over to the wardroom for Surface Warfare Officer (SWO) training. The day followed through with several visits by the CO, CAPT Michael Brannon. We then headed around the ship for several inspections of various spaces and a visit to the Command Master Chief, CMDCM(SW/AW) Richard Makowski, followed by a trip up to the bridge where I was acknowledged, just like the XO himself. He showed me the equipment used for navigation, and as we prepared for UNREP (underway replenishment) the CO and XO conversed quietly to each other about our position as if they wanted only me to hear.

It was at this point that I started to feel important, not only because of my current adventure, but also because I

(see 'Deputy XO' on pg. 7)

After 38 Days at Sea, a Little Time Off



Enjoying much deserved time off, YN3 Cindy Flessert (left) and YN2(SW) David Ruiz admire the detailed ceiling of a room inside an ancient fort in Manama, Bahrain. The fort once served as protection from enemy ships and anyone who threatened the island and its people. NASSAU's Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) sponsored several tours for the crew while in port Bahrain.



NASSAU Sailors follow Farid Hassan, a Bahrain tour guide hired by MWR, to show the Bahrain culture along the gulf coast.



SK2 Matt Duck waits while his order of bread is prepared. The hand made bread takes only a few seconds to cook and is placed inside the wall of a fire oven.



AA Jennamarie Hunt browses through a shop selling handmade pottery during a cultural tour in Manama, Bahrain.

*USN photos by
PHAN Steven Scott Smith.*

Gator In The Spotlight

IC1(SW/AW) Sollie Davis

Navy experience: 13 years
Time on board: 4 years
Hometown: Tuscaloosa, Ala.

What made you decide to join the Navy?

I decided I wanted to see the world, earn some money, further my education, improve my personal deficiencies – like dealing with people because I'm shy – and I wanted to become a better person. The Navy helped me accomplish everything I wanted to do. So yes, the Navy was a great decision for me.

Why did you choose to become an Interior Communications Electrician?

I was offered Sonar Tech and Interior Communications (IC) electrician. Becoming an IC was the wisest one for me because I like challenges and I didn't want to be stuck in an office all day. Plus, the civilian world always needs someone with the Navy skills I now possess as an IC.



What is the biggest misconception about being an IC?

Some Sailors think we don't have a job or we don't do anything but watch television all day. But truth be known, we are always out working around the ship. Underway we work anywhere from 16 to 22 hours a day. We are responsible for sound powered communications, net circuits, POTS lines, phone systems administrative maintenance, all sensing and monitoring systems for navigation, air, engineering, deck and the list of jobs goes on.

Congratulations on your selection as NASSAU's Sailor of the Year. How do you feel?

I feel honored. My selection is a reflection of my department and division. If it weren't for the guys in my shop, those that set the path for me to follow and those that groomed me, I don't think I would have been se-

lected. The competition was extremely tough.

What are your future Navy goals?

My first goal is to get Combat Systems Officer of the Watch Qualified. I also want to get selected for Chief this cycle and make Senior Chief before my 20 year mark.

Life after the Navy – what will you do?

I already have an art design/studio business in Virginia Beach. I hope to start a second business in net communications and home entertainment once I retire.

Anything about your Navy career you would change?

I wish I took to heart all of the information and teaching of my supervisors when I was first out in my Navy career.

“As I See It,” from page 2.

With the holiday season behind us, and a third of our deployment over, the middle third of the deployment normally presents the most challenges for leadership. We must find ways to keep our Sailors' minds on the business at hand. This is the point of the cruise where tempers become shorter and personal space becomes sacred.

This is the time where all I can offer to the crew is the advice to give tolerance with one another, to respect each other, and when you get mad, count to 10 before you say something negative. This is as predictable as the weather for the area. It's the same on every cruise I have gone on before. Best friends can become en-

“Deputy XO,” from page 3.

was beginning to see the big picture of how things worked.

I spent about four hours during UNREP with the CO and the XO. I had plenty of time to ask questions about the ship and the Navy and listened in awe as they commanded the ship, “One degree this way, two degrees that way!” We then went to the (Navigation/Operations) brief, and with the exception of the intel portion, I stayed in its entirety.

Several times through out the day, the XO would hand me some important document and say, “Check this out, make sure it's alright and then give it back to me.” This made me smile as well, seeing that he always used me as part of the chain of command just below him.

As the day came to an end, I witnessed an Ensign get promoted to LTJG, and saw the warm welcome that was given him. The day came to a close in the XO's office, with a picture of he and I taken by the Air Boss.

So what did I learn out of all this?

The XO has a ton of responsibility which is not fathomable until you actually see it. I also saw the amount of respect that he received from everyone, and by standing in his shadow I got a little of it too. I saw that even though it may seem sometimes like our senior officer's don't know what goes on with the junior enlisted, believe me, they do know a whole lot more than you would

emies in 1.2 seconds. I challenge the crew to be supportive of your shipmate and just give each other a little more space over the next few months.

As I finish out this article for the *Gator Times*, I must once again thank the families and friends for their support. Being away for the holidays is tough on a Sailor, but you made a difference in the lives of your special NASSAU Sailor. Your support has allowed them to complete their daily tasks in an upbeat manner under some of the most demanding circumstances. And they did this with the pride and professionalism of a true United States Navy Sailor.

Please continue your support. Until the next time, thank you and God Bless.

ever imagine. They know pretty much every discrepancy that happens, even the smaller more insignificant details, like which bulkhead needs to be painted and which toilet in the head is broken.

I also learned how much networking and teamwork it actually takes to run a ship. The XO does a lot, but he can't do it all alone, and if it weren't for the support he has from his subordinates, it would be a much more difficult job.

The next time you think about your XO or CO, you should know they really do know what is going on with you and your division. It's just very difficult to come to each person and ask them about their problems. While everyone has problems, the XO and the CO on board NASSAU seemed to attack every issue and every problem very calmly and intelligently, deciding together as a team what the best course of action should be. Sometimes it does take awhile for things to get up to your chain of command, but I promise you that if you have something that needs to be addressed, it will go up to the XO and CO. I can tell you that because I have seen it first hand.

An honor was given to me on that Monday, as some who have served longer than I have been alive will never get to see the more important administrative and technical decisions that are handled by senior officers. After only five months in the Navy, I got to see it all.

Bravo Zulu

CMC's Super Sailors Of The Day

23 Dec – ATAN Robert Sutphin (AIMD)
24 Dec – CSSN James Frazier (SUP)
25 Dec – QMSN James Rogers (NAV)
26 Dec – IT3 Michael Bartholomew (C5I)
27 Dec – MM3 Kyle Schoettlin (ENG)
28 Dec – AN Rudolph Ross (AIR)
29 Dec – GM3 Ernest Huizar (WEPS)
30 Dec – SN Danny Dayton (DECK)
31 Dec – SHSN Brandon Denson (SUP)
1 Jan – SN Antuan Johnson (SEC)
2 Jan – FC3 Brandon Wilkinson (C5I)
3 Jan – MM3 Michael Traver (ENG)
4 Jan – AN Keisha Edwards (AIR)
5 Jan – OS3 Mathew Rainbolt OPS)
6 Jan – AZ3 Jose Marte (AIMD)
ASAN Jorge Loaiza (AIMD)

Sailor of the Year

IC1 (SW/AW) Sollie Davis

Junior Sailor of the Year

BM3(SW/AW) Michael Cassidy

Navy Commendation Medal

LCDR Karl Lindblad

Joint Service Achievement Medal

CTT2 Brian Forney

Navy Achievement Medal

CS1 Aleithia Young
IT2 Jeremiah Cleveland

Enlisted Surface Warfare Specialist

OS2 Kimberly Harper
IT2 Delvaughn
IT2 Phillip Valencia
OS3 Justin Noble
OS3 Matthew Rainbolt
OS3 Jamal Whitehead
OSSN Geoffrey Fuller
RPSN Johnathan Oliveros

Enlisted Aviation Warfare Specialist

MM1 Paul Mata
EN1 Stephen Price
EM1 Ricky Williams
MM2 Oscar Rodriguez-Gonzalez
AT3 Christopher Dillow
ABHAN Nandesh Baliraj
AN Phillip Cortez
ABHAN Charles Jones



Sailors Receive Special Gift of Laughter



USN photo by PH2(AW) Susan Milton.

Steve Burr (left), Pete Lee (second from left) and Scott Henry (right) take a moment to get their photo taken with DM1 Charmin Covington, one of the few women they saw while performing during their USO comedy tour through the Arabian Gulf.

By JO1 Ardelle L. Purcell

NASSAU Sailors received a special performance and a bag full of laughs during this holiday season, when Comics on Duty presented “X-mas in the Gulf,” Dec. 27, 2005.

Comedians Steve Burr, Pete Lee and Scott Henry brought joy to Sailors during a critical time of the deployment – the holidays.

“They were the best show I’ve seen at sea and I must admit they were extremely funny and had me in tears,” said AS1(AW/SW) Thomas B. Medford, IMO4 Division LPO. “I really appreciated Comics on Duty coming out to help the crew laugh and get away from the daily grind for awhile.”

“They could have been home for the holidays spending time with their families in a warm home recanting old holiday stories but they weren’t. They were here because they believe in what we do,” he said.

Almost two months into her scheduled six-month deployment, NASSAU’s Morale Welfare and Recreation (MWR)

committee is fulfilling its task of providing Sailors with well-rounded recreational programs.

“MWR applied in August for entertainment opportunities during deploy-

ment through the Navy Special Event and Entertainment Program,” said Greg Werner, NASSAU Afloat Recreation Specialist. “We worked closely with the program coordinator, the NASSAU chain of command and 5th Fleet to make this show happen.”

Since 1992, Comics on Duty have performed approximately 1,800 shows worldwide and entertained thousands of military personnel. They have also performed 185 shows at 71 different sites inside Iraq and over 250 performances overall in support of both Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

“They cared enough about us to come all the way out here and support us,” said SN(SW) Takisha Bailey. “Not too many people will be away from their families to bring others happiness. That says a lot about them. It made me think more positively because I was kind of depressed about being away from my family,” she said.

Continuing to keep Sailor’s morale high, NASSAU’s MWR committee has big plans for the remainder of the deployment. “MWR will be focusing on steel beach picnics, 3-on-3 basketball tournaments and a talent show,” said Werner.



USN photo by PH2(AW) Susan Milton

NASSAU Sailors enjoy Steve Burr’s performance.